New Light on Arnold Bogomil Ehrlich

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The work of Arnold Bogomil Ehrlich (1848–1919) as a biblical exegete has been the subject of much critical comment. His *Mikra Ki-Feshuto* [The Bible according to its plain meaning] (Berlin, 1899–1901) and his *Randglossen zur hebraischen Bibel* [Marginal notes to the Hebrew Bible] (Leipzig, 1908–1914) have been hailed as being among the most significant contributions to biblical scholarship made in America. The former work, published in three volumes, contains his Hebrew comments on the various books of the Bible, while the latter, intended for a general audience, expanded on part of the material from the Hebrew commentary and included, as well, many new interpretations.

Despite Ehrlich's shortcomings, much praise was accorded him for his originality and philological expertise, and he has been ranked with the leading Jewish biblical exegetes of the nineteenth century. A renewal of interest in Ehrlich's work was evidenced in 1969 with the publication of new editions of his *Mikra* both in America and in Israel.[1] The American edition appeared as part of the Library of Biblical Studies, edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, who contributed an informative Prolegomenon offering an evaluation of Ehrlich, as well as biographical data and a survey of the critical literature on him.

Despite the renewed attention which has been given to Ehrlich, many gaps remain to be filled in regarding his life and personality. Most of his biographers have persisted in giving 1878 as the year of his arrival in America. They have overlooked Richard Gottheil's account of Ehrlich's return to the Jewish fold following his coming to these shores and Ehrlich's formal declaration to that effect dated March 7, 1876.[2] Moreover, none of Ehrlich's biographers were aware of his pioneering contributions to the American Yiddish press, in which he made his debut with a poem as early as 1877. From his writings and announcements in the *Yudishe Gazetn* [Jewish gazette] during the early 1880's we learn of his difficult struggle to make a living by maintaining an artist's studio. In addition to teaching penmanship, he made

Arnold Bogomil Ehrlich (1848–1919) with his wife (at left) and daughter

crayon portraits and did calligraphy work. As is well known, he tried his hand at various other occupations and at different times supported himself by teaching and in business.[3] Among Ehrlich's positions was that of instructor in the Hebrew Preparatory School of Temple Emanu-el. For a period of eight years he was employed by the United Hebrew Charities in New York. As is evident from his unpublished correspondence, he was prepared to leave New York after losing his job if a suitable teaching post were available. An effort was made in 1909 by a New York preparatory school to form a Hebrew department which was to be supervised by Ehrlich. The *American Hebrew*, in announcing this fact in its issue of May 9, 1909, praised Ehrlich as an eminent Hebraist and urged support of the endeavor. Apparently, however, the attempt did not meet with success.

Ehrlich and Franz Delitzsch

What militated against Ehrlich's obtaining an academic position was his conversion to Christianity in Leipzig and his association with Franz Delitzsch, whom he assisted in translating the New Testament. Ehrlich's motive for converting was undoubtedly that of other East European Jews who had sought a "ticket of entry" into the world of learning and scholarship in Germany. Upon his arrival in America he was quick to renounce his act.

Ehrlich continued to hold Delitzsch in high regard throughout his life because of the help he gave him in pursuing his studies. This is clear from the fact that he saw fit to dedicate the first volume of his *Mikra* (1900) to Delitzsch, whom he characterized as his "unforgettable and fatherly friend." His close attachment to Delitzsch is evident also from the autobiographical recollections which he contributed to *Saat auf Hoffnung* [Seed for hope], the missionary journal edited by Delitzsch.

In 1888 there appeared in this journal an unsigned contribution entitled "Aus dem Briefe ein Versamten" [From the letter of a solitary man],[4] in which the writer reminisced about his childhood days in the *heder*. The author was not identified by name, but the editor's note praising him for his talmudic knowledge and expertise in Classical and Semitic languages clearly pointed to Ehrlich as the writer. As was often his custom in his correspondence, Ehrlich incorporated a biblical comment, this time on a verse from the New Testament in which

reference is made to the "children of Abraham" (John 8:39). On the basis of this verse he pleaded for the removal of hatred from the teachings of the church. Ehrlich also included warm regards to Delitzsch and stated that he was no longer the same young man that Delitzsch had known. He added that it was thanks to the help of Christianity that he was no more the Polish Jew that he had once been.

Apparently, Delitzsch encouraged Ehrlich to expand upon his reminiscences, for the following year saw publication in Delitzsch's journal of Ehrlich's "Aus dem Cheder" [From the *heder*], signed with the initials A.B.E.[5] In belletristic fashion Ehrlich expanded on his childhood experiences and recalled his schoolday pranks. He indicated that he was an only child and that he had been orphaned at an early age. In the *heder* he had already preferred the study of the Bible to that of the Talmud. Once, while musing upon the Joseph story, he lost his place and brought down upon himself the wrath of the *melamed* ("teacher"). He also recalled that at the age of fourteen he was betrothed to the daughter of the rabbi of the neighboring town of Zielchow, but that the marriage did not take place. After describing the fate of the *melamed* and his family, Ehrlich was led to explain why he had offered such an unflattering picture of *heder* life. He is apologetic for the Polish Jew who had to undergo such an education, which in no manner prepared him for life. It was this faulty educational system that was a factor in influencing many to leave Poland and seek a better future for themselves and their children. Undoubtedly Ehrlich reflected here his own difficult decision as a young man to leave for Germany in order to further his education.

Ehrlich's Yiddish and Hebrew Poetry

As indicated, Ehrlich's Yiddish writings have remained an unknown chapter in his literary activity. Few Yiddish poems had appeared in America prior to the publication in 1877 of Jacob Zvi Soble's slim volume of Hebrew and Yiddish poems, *Shir Zahav le-Khevod Yisrael ha-Zaken* [A golden hymn in honor of age-old Israel]. That same year, on July 20, there was published in the *Yudishe Gazetn* a poem signed with the initials Alef Ayin and entitled "Dem Kohen Godol's Kinder" [The high priest's children]. Its subtitle indicated that it was based on a theme from the Midrash. The initials Alef Ayin stood, of course, for Arnold Ehrlich.

That Ehrlich was the author of the poem is obvious from its style, which resembles that of his other signed contributions to the *Yudishe Gazetn*. The poem, consisting of twelve four-line rhymed stanzas, is based on the account in tractate *Gittin* 55a regarding the son and daughter of Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha. Following the destruction of the Temple, they were taken captive and enslaved by separate owners. These decided to marry them off to each other and placed them in a dark room where they wept bitterly the night through. When they recognized each other by the light of day they expired in their sorrow.

Ehrlich's penchant for poetic expression was seen on a number of occasions. A second full-length poem of his, consisting of seven eight-line stanzas and entitled "Der Alter Yisrolik" [The age-old Jew], appeared in the *Nu Yorker Yudishe Folkstsaytung* [New York Jewish people's newspaper] of March 25, 1887. It, too, bore only his initials. Reviewing Jewish suffering and exile through the ages, the poem exhorts the Jewish people to continue to uphold the cause of freedom. It urges them to avoid bowing down to the golden calf and calls upon them to champion the interests of the workers. Finally, it foresees an end to wandering and vouchsafes an era of equality in the new land. Stressing as it did the rights of the new immigrant working class, Ehrlich's poem found ready acceptance in the *Yudishe Folkstsaytung*, which reflected socialist ideals. Occasionally Ehrlich also included Yiddish verses in the novels which he wrote for the Yiddish press.

From time to time Ehrlich also wrote Hebrew verse. In his Hebrew commentary, he remarks that a verse concerning David (II Samuel 23:15) had made such a profound impression upon him that he was led to compose a poem about it. He saw fit to reprint the poem together with his commentary on the verse.[6] Following the death of Michael Heilprin, he penned a Hebrew poem, "Le-Mikhael" [To Michael], which he published together with an English translation in the *American Hebrew* of May 18, 1888.[7] To the Hebrew monthly *Kadimah* he contributed a rhymed poetic version of an Arabic fable entitled "Abd-Allah ve-Shalosh Mishalotav" [Abd-Allah and his three wishes].[8] His Hebrew style is replete with biblical allusions and cadences.

Earning a Living

The period of Ehrlich's Yiddish writing bears witness to the painful struggle of a scholar to earn a livelihood in America during the 1870's

and 1880's. From several of the announcements and articles which he published in the *Yudishe Gazetn* we obtain a glimpse into his often difficult circumstances.

In the issues of May 5 and 14, 1880, we find an announcement entitled "Fine Penmanship," in which it is stated that Professor Ehrlich was prepared to teach students how to write elegantly in English, German, and Hebrew in ten hours. It indicates that he had established a studio for this purpose at a *Turnhalle* ("sports-club hall") and that he had published a booklet on his method for self-study. Ehrlich was prepared to give private lessons either at the *Turnhalle* or at his home.

An article published in installments beginning June 4, 1880, and entitled "History of Penmanship and the Teacher as Doctor," was signed Prof. David Ehrlich, indicating for the first time what his Hebrew name was. For the most part, Ehrlich customarily used the name Arnold Bogomil. In his article he underscored the importance of a fine hand, and stressed that it could be acquired in but ten hours. Not being able to write well was a sickness which could be cured by the expert, who, in this regard, was akin to a doctor.

That Ehrlich was intent upon making his expertise in penmanship a source of livelihood is evident from his contribution entitled "Di Fernunft" [Common sense], published in installments beginning August 6, 1880. It was featured as an article from the pen of Prof. David Ehrlich, "author of the new method of penmanship and stenography." In this mixture of analysis and anecdote, he presented eight criteria for measuring "common sense" and enumerated various great figures and groups of people who possessed one or more attributes of this quality. That Ehrlich had a practical purpose in penning this article is clear from his statement that those who did not come to him to "study reading, penmanship, reckoning, bookkeeping, painting and drawing" were among those who were lacking in good sense. He recalled that in 1873 he had sent two hundred samples of writing, including one hundred Hebrew ones, to the Vienna World Exhibition and stated that these could be viewed at his home. He indicated that he was fluent in six languages, including Hebrew, and that anyone could acquire a fine hand for Hebrew writing in but five hours.

On September 17, 1880, and again two weeks later, there appeared an announcement by Ehrlich under the heading "Crayon Drawings," which drew attention to the fact that he was ready to make drawings from the smallest photographs. The announcement indicated that his

drawings had been exhibited in 1873 at the Vienna World Exhibition and that they could be viewed at his studio. It stated also that lessons were available in painting and drawing. The announcement was signed, "Artist and Caligrapher [*sic*] Prof. D. Ehrlich, 184 East 76 Str., N.Y." Similar announcements appeared also during the following months.

An announcement dated January 6, 1882, urged the readers of the *Yudishe Gazetn* to visit Ehrlich's studio, where many remarkable things were on view. Life-size crayon drawings from photos could be obtained for $12. Lodges and organizations could turn to him for resolutions, scrolls, and other calligraphy work. Lessons were also available in stenography and in Hebrew, German, or English penmanship, as well as in drawing and painting. Reference was again made to Ehrlich's brochure outlining his method for self-study, and it was indicated that he was willing to receive goods in barter for his services.

Ehrlich as a Yiddish Novelist

During 1880 Ehrlich began to contribute literary pieces to the *Yudishe Gazetn*. On September 3 there appeared his short feature entitled "Retsel, Vits un Sherts" [Riddle, wit and, jest]. It consisted of a rhymed riddle, an anecdote concerning two drunkards, and the following witticism: "Question: Why did Adam bite the apple? Answer: Because he had no knife with which to cut it."

Ehrlich's subsequent contributions were more substantial and consisted of lengthy novels, as well as articles. His first novel, *Di Fardinte Shtrofe* [The well-deserved punishment], which began to appear in installments on October 1, 1880 (dated September 31!), may have the distinction of being the first original Yiddish novel to be published in America and to appear in serialized form. As such it is deserving of special attention.

Ehrlich's novel, like his other Yiddish writings, is couched in the heavy Germanic style, or *daytshmerish*, which characterized the Yiddish of this period. It belongs to the genre of novel writing known as *shund*, or trashy, trivial literature. The seventeen chapters of the novel present a melodramatic, romantic tale dealing with a baron's spoiled son who falls in love with a servant-girl. Against the baron's wishes, he marries her after a torrid love affair and has a son. Upon acceding to the barony following his father's death, the son lives lavishly and falls

into debt. To cover his expenses, he forges notes, and when he is found out shoots the official who comes to arrest him.

Complication follows upon complication. The young baron flees to the island of Sumatra, where he establishes himself and is eventually joined by his wife and son. When the child is carried off into the jungle by an orangutan the mother dies of sorrow and the father searches incessantly for the lost child. Some years later he finds him, but the boy, who no longer recognizes the father, is flung to his death by the orangutan. The father becomes crazed and wanders off into the jungle, where he falls prey to wild beasts.

The melodramatic character of the novel, which is relieved only from time to time by the interspersing of such literary devices as a love letter, and verses and observations of the author, is of a piece with the type of *shund* that was then current in German literature. This genre, which was adopted by Yiddish writers, performed a service which has come to be evaluated more positively by such critics as Samuel Niger[9] and, more recently, Chone Shmeruk.[10] During the formative period of Yiddish writing in this country, as well as in Europe, *shund* literature prepared the way for later, more artistic creativity. In this process, the Yiddish press served as an important instrument for developing a readership. Writers like Shomer, who came to these shores from Russia in 1889, produced endless reams of stories which catered to the tastes of the popular reader but helped nevertheless to fulfill a need. They opened up for the reader an imaginative and sensational world of barons, robbers, and romance which drew him to Yiddish literature. The *shund* novels were an integral part of modern Yiddish writing beginning with the second half of the 1870's. Ehrlich can thus be reckoned among the pioneers of this genre, which is assuming ever greater significance as a legitimate object of study and research by students of Yiddish literature.

In a postscript to *Di Fardinte Shtrofe*, dated March 11, 1881, Ehrlich commented on the reactions of his readers. He writes that while some may have considered his novel to be absorbing, others had found it too difficult because of his emphasis on a pure Germanic style. But one cannot satisfy all tastes, for to do so the publisher would have to issue as many editions of his newspaper as there were readers. Ehrlich thanked the readers who had followed the installments of his novel and promised to continue to provide them with interesting reading material.

During 1881, Ehrlich contributed various pieces to the *Yudishe Gazetn*, including a humoresque (badly damaged in the microfilm) in which he obviously drew upon his student experiences. Entitled "Aynen Rukblik in Mayne Fergangenhayt" [A look back at my past] and printed in the issues of March 18 and 25, it describes the experiences of an impoverished student at Prague University. In the issues of December 9 and 16, we find Ehrlich commenting on such news events as the trial of President Garfield's assassin and a fire in a Vienna circus. Beginning December 30, he published an article in several installments concerning the North Pole. On various occasions he did not fail to remind his readers that they could avail themselves of his lessons in penmanship or order his crayon portraits.

Ehrlich's literary energies in Yiddish were devoted for the most part, however, to the writing of additional novels, three of which saw serialization in the pages of the *Yudishe Gazetn*. They included *Ayn Glentsendes Elend* [A splendid loneliness] in thirteen chapters, beginning May 13, 1881; *Ayne Naye Ferlobung* [A new betrothal] in seven chapters, beginning September 30, 1881; and his unconcluded *Ayn Teifel in Menshlikhen Geshtalt* [A devil in human form] in two parts and over twenty installments, beginning February 24, 1882.

In "A Splendid Loneliness," a count falls in love with a woman who has a three-year-old son. He offers to marry her on condition that she give up the child. Some two decades later a young artist is invited by the count to teach and paint, and the countess feels a strange attachment to him. The countess and the artist—her lost son—are eventually reunited, but not before the count's suspicions are aroused and he shoots the artist in a fit of jealousy. All ends well when the artist recovers and marries the count's cousin.

In a long postscript, dated September 23, 1881, Ehrlich good-humoredly discussed with his readers how he composed his novels. If they wished to read additional good novels from his pen, they were to follow a number of rules, including the following: to subscribe to no other newspaper except the *Yudishe Gazetn*; to order his crayon portraits and take his penmanship course; and to commission artistic resolutions for their lodges and organizations. He reported that he was planning to open a large studio and invited his readers to view one of his life-size portraits then on exhibit at the American Institute. In addition, they could view at his home his collection of Jewish, oriental, and hieroglyphic scripts. Finally, Ehrlich took leave of his readers until

the following week when a humorous tale of his, devoid of sensationalism, was to commence. One can only assume that Ehrlich utilized every opportunity for publicizing his services because he received but meager compensation for his writings.

Ehrlich's humoresque "A New Betrothal" opens with a realistic description of the Galician town of Belz and satirizes the custom of early marriage. The butt of his humor is the initial meeting of the young bride and groom and their families, which does not take place until the betrothal. The first match does not come off because the bride is discovered to have but one eye. However, Itsikel, the fourteen-year-old groom, agrees to marry the younger sister, but not before a series of hilarious events are unfolded which culminate in their unknowingly sharing the same bed in an inn. The various chapters offer a satire on the provincial ways of the townspeople, on various types and their superstitions. In his postscript, Ehrlich drew attention to his forthcoming novel, which he asserted would outdo all his previous efforts.

The lengthy novel "A Devil in Human Form" introduces a series of sensational events concerning the evildoings of the villain Vladimir. In part 1 we find him carrying out his plan of revenge against a Jewish innkeeper whom he transports to Lemberg in order to immure him in a cellar wall. A servant-girl tries to free the innkeeper but is stabbed. Vladimir is hanged and is taken for dead but miraculously survives and flees to America. Thus ends part 1. In his postscript, Ehrlich again urged his readers to patronize his artist's studio.

Part 2 finds Vladimir continuing his evildoings in America. He joins up with a wealthy young count who has advertised for a travel companion and whom he closely resembles. When they are shipwrecked on an island Vladimir connives to take the count's place and to return to the castle of the count's father. The balance of the novel, which remained unconcluded, is taken up with Vladimir's machinations to convince those at home that he is indeed the true son. We do not know why Ehrlich did not finish the novel, but we can well imagine that he would have brought the true son back in order to end on a happy note.

Ehrlich was to try his hand once more at a novel and in 1883 published a sixty-page brochure entitled *Tray Biz in der Tod* [True unto death]. The title page indicated that the novel was written for the *Yudishe Gazetn* and was printed at its press. Since only scattered pages remain of the 1883 issues of the newspaper, we have no way of deter-

mining whether it was previously serialized. The issuing of Ehrlich's novel as a separate brochure indicates that there was a growing market for *shund* literature, which reached its apex in America with the "plague of brochures" of the 1890's.

The involved plot deals again with the high life of the aristocratic upper class. The central character is Baron Feche, who resides in his castle in Bohemia. His addiction to gambling leads him to become mortgaged to the Jewish banker Kramer. The story is peopled with a host of characters, including the Jewish Professor Horn, who is a tutor in the baron's castle and wishes to marry his daughter Sophia. The baron goes to all lengths to obtain funds for his gambling. Finally, he wins a fortune at Monte Carlo, only to end up dead, apparently a victim of his own excitement. Thus ends part 1.

Parts 2 and 3 detail a series of contrived events in the lives of the baron's son and daughter and their circle. The closing chapters of this tale of intrigue depict the efforts of a woman to free her husband from a Prague mental institution to which he has been unjustly confined. Despite her elaborate and fanciful ruse to smuggle out her husband, she is unsuccessful and stabs herself, thus remaining true to him unto death itself. The sordid events are interspersed with the author's reflections on such matters as the role of religious instruction in the shaping of character and on the fact that riches do not ensure happiness. Ehrlich remarked parenthetically that he had already seen to it that he would not die a millionaire.

Scholarly Writings

In his biographical work, Richard Gottheil made mention of the fact that his father, Gustav, had induced the board of trustees of Temple Emanu-el to engage Ehrlich to catalogue the collection of books which it had purchased from Amsterdam. He indicated that the catalogue, which consisted of two large folio volumes, was "made with Mr. Ehrlich's characteristic exactness."[11]

Among the volumes in the collection were several from the library of Jacob Emden. That Ehrlich had made a careful study of Emden's writings and manuscript notes is evident from his article "Die unedirte Schriften J. Emden's in der Bibliothek des Temple 'Emanu-El' zu New York" [The unedited writings of J. Emden in the library of Temple

Emanu-el in New York], which he published in installments in 1881 in the Milwaukee *Der Zeitgeist*.[12] After describing the collection, he discussed several of Emden's works, including his biblical commentaries, and commented on their value.[13]

An editorial in the *American Hebrew* of January 4, 1899, entitled "Drash," drew attention to Ehrlich's article in that issue, "Light on the New Testament from Jewish Sources," as a "most important contribution to the discussion of the question in controversy between Christians and Jews." It pointed out that the article, which should have been welcomed by Christian periodicals, showed conclusively how "in quoting from the Old Testament Jesus sought to substantiate his ideas by means of misquotations—drash—which involved no wrong when originally used." Ehrlich gave several examples of biblical verses which, when quoted by Jesus and the apostles, were given christological interpretations that are not borne out by the text.

Ehrlich contributed brief biblical comments to the Hebrew journal *Kadimah* in 1899 under the title "Hiddushe Mikra" [New biblical interpretations].[14] The comments, dealing with various verses from the Former Prophets, were incorporated for the most part in volume 2 of his *Mikra* with some additions and changes.

To the journal *Hebraica*, published in Chicago, Ehrlich contributed a short article entitled "*Hey* and *Hai*," in which he discussed the differences between these two forms and their biblical usage.[15] He later incorporated his suggestions in his *Randglossen*, in his comments on Genesis 42:15, where the expression *hey pharaoh* is used.

Ehrlich's Financial Problems

Ehrlich was always hard put to finance the publication of his commentaries. One of the sources of his support was the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the Yearbooks of this organization offer a record of its interest in his work. At its conference held in Detroit in 1903, Rabbi Isaac S. Moses asked that Ehrlich be given an opportunity to "explain a few Psalms in the light of his exegesis," and permission was granted for holding such a session. A resolution adopted by the conference recommended that the executive committee be empowered to appropriate a sum of money in order to aid in the publication of Ehrlich's edition of the Psalms. It was supported by Gotthard Deutsch,

Isaac S. Moses, Hyman G. Enelow, Jacob Voorsanger, and Edward N. Calisch. The motion was amended to subscribe for fifty copies that would be distributed among various institutions.[16] Further reference to this matter was made at the 1905 conference.[17]

In 1907 the committee on resolutions proposed the allocating of $200 towards the publication of four volumes of Ehrlich's *Randglossen*, with $50 to be remitted on the publication of each volume.[18] When the death of Ehrlich was noted in the *CCAR Yearbook*, mention was made of the assistance provided to him.[19]

In his correspondence with such leading Reform rabbis as Bernhard Felsenthal[20] and Gustav Gottheil,[21] dating from the end of the 1890's, Ehrlich indicated that the printing costs of his *Mikra* were a drain on his meager resources and expressed gratitude for their encouragement and support. In his extensive correspondence with Maximilian Heller,[22] spanning the years 1900–1910, Ehrlich reported regularly on the progress of his work. He was in touch with Heller particularly during 1909–1910, when the latter was president of the CCAR, and he complained about the delay in the payment of the subvention that had been voted him.

Ehrlich's letters to Felsenthal, written in German, reveal his difficult financial straits. On December 17, 1898, he wrote that he had been unemployed for one and a half years and that the publication of volume 1 of his *Randglossen* had exhausted most of his savings. He asked whether Felsenthal could recommend him for a teaching position outside of New York and offered as a reference the name of Henry Rice, president of the United Hebrew Charities, where he had been employed for eight years. He indicated that he had also written to Emil G. Hirsch asking his help in obtaining a teaching post.

When Ehrlich wrote to Felsenthal again on January 10, 1899, he expressed some annoyance over the fact that Felsenthal had not sufficiently valued his contribution to Hebrew lexicography and grammar and mentioned the praise he had received from Dr. Marcus Petuchowski of Berlin. Ehrlich wrote movingly of his commentary as his life's work, for which he was prepared to make financial sacrifices. A month later, on February 10, 1899, he expressed thanks to Felsenthal for his encouragement and warm interest. He asked whether Dr. Hirsch's position at the University of Chicago had become vacant and whether he could be recommended for it. He also informed Felsenthal

that he had prepared his commentary on the Prophets for the printer and enclosed some galleys from his commentary on Leviticus and Deuteronomy. As in his previous letters, he added a number of comments on various biblical verses, for the most part in Hebrew but also in German and English.

To Gustav Gottheil Ehrlich wrote in German on September 27, 1899, thanking him for his aid and indicating that he hadn't earned any money for the past two years. He had tried his hand at auctioneering but had lost several hundred dollars. The rest of his savings had been expended on the publication of the first part of the *Mikra*. He informed Gottheil that he had returned to Stephen S. Wise the larger check he had received, since he did not feel justified in accepting funds for his personal use. In the last part of the letter he presented his views on the use of the various divine names in the Bible. He incorporated this material later in his commentary on Jeremiah 2:11 in volume 3 of the *Mikra*, page 165.

Ehrlich's letters to Maximilian Heller, written in English, contain various references to his work, as well as several of his biblical comments. On December 12, 1900, he wrote that he was busily at work on the third part of his *Mikra*. He informed Heller that "this volume will show that over eight hundred passages are misunderstood in the Prophets proper alone." He added: "I am constantly on my guard against being misled by the accents, and I do not care whether the Biblical writers turn out to be saints or rogues." He offered two illustrations of his method and enclosed also his German rendition of the *U'Netaneh Tokef* prayer.

The following year, on March 25, 1901, Ehrlich inquired whether Heller would write the article on his work which he had promised to submit to the *American Hebrew*. He added a "word of Torah" on two verses from Ezekiel and commented on the review of volume 1 of the *Mikra* which had appeared in the *Gottingische Gelehrte Anzeiger* [Gottingen learned reviewer]. While it was not altogether favorable, he was satisfied with the praise it offered of his knowledge of the biblical language.

On October 17, 1901, Ehrlich wrote that he was sorry to learn that Heller was unable to prepared his promised article because of sickness in his family. He hoped that Rabbi Wolff Willner[23] would be able to write a review. He informed Heller that an index of over one hundred

pages was planned for a fourth volume, but could not be sure if such a volume would appear. He wrote:

> The outlook is certainly dismal, and I am despondent. For every one is not pleased with my performance like you, and the majority of socalled Jewish scholars does not care for it at all. As a result I am losing money. Indeed my own copy of each volume costs me over $400, besides the humiliation of asking for aid towards the publication.

Ehrlich confided that he had not earned a living "these four or five years" and that he would gladly leave New York if Heller could recommend him for a teaching post. Finally, he indicated that he was continuing to work on volume 4, which would take two years to complete. He hoped that Heller could raise $100 towards the cost of its publication. In a postscript he added: "Please do not title me Professor. In this country a dancing master, or even a man who trains dogs, is a professor."

In his letter of January 22, 1902, Ehrlich informed Heller that he had written to Rabbi Willner urging him to write the review of his work. He reported that, outside of New York, he had sold no copy of his *Mikra* to any Hebrew Union College graduate, "unless Louis Grossman and David Philipson be considered graduates." He mentioned that he was working on the Psalms, in which he had noted over five hundred mistranslations, and gave several examples of errors to be corrected. His postscript reads: "It will take me about three years to get the concluding volume ready for publication. When I am ready for print, I shall very likely not have the necessary funds."

On November 22, 1909, Ehrlich addressed Heller as president of the CCAR and voiced a complaint concerning the subvention of $200 which had been voted him two years previously. Dr. Samuel Schulman, who had made the motion, had mistakenly stated that there would be four volumes instead of two. Ehrlich pointed out that he had received only $50, for which he had furnished the Conference with twenty-five copies of volumes 1 and 2. He felt that the sum he had received was inadequate in light of the printing costs of about $600 and the additional postage from Europe.

In subsequent letters Ehrlich continued to press Heller for remittment of the subvention. He informed him on March 12, 1910, that he was soon to leave for Europe to see volume 3 through the press. In an

undated letter sent that year Ehrlich thanked Heller for being one of three rabbis who had taken an interest in his work and informed him that the total cost of his first two volumes had come to $1,800. Towards this sum he had received $620 in aid and had realized $438 from sales in Europe and America. He was left with a loss of $742 and asked Heller to raise $100 towards volume 3. On September 29, 1910, Ehrlich sent Heller volume 3 and asked for a third installment of the CCAR subvention. A note by Heller on still another letter dated February 27, 1911, records that he had signed a voucher for this sum and had so informed Ehrlich.

Relations with Other Scholars

A scholar who had early befriended Ehrlich was Israel Davidson. In her biography of her husband, Carrie Davidson recorded that Ehrlich was a regular visitor at their home, and that during his visits he would share his latest interpretations and discoveries.[24] Writing on August 11, 1899, Ehrlich communicated a number of exegetical comments. Referring to the verse concerning King Hezekiah, "He did what was pleasing to the Lord" (II Kings 18:3), he expressed in a Hebrew excursus his doubts as to the historicity of the Former Prophets.

That Davidson held Ehrlich in high regard is seen from his review entitled "Mikra Ki-Pheshuto," published in the *American Hebrew* of September 29, 1899.[25] Davidson wrote: "I, for one, find this commentary more fascinating than many a Hebrew novel." He went on to praise its style and to laud it as a "veritable storehouse of Hebrew grammatical and lexicographical lore." Davidson cited a number of examples from the work but expressed disapproval of Ehrlich's disrespectful treatment of the great medieval exegetes.

Ehrlich continued to correspond with Davidson in later years. From Germany, to which he had gone to supervise the printing of the first volume of his *Randglossen*, he wrote on August 1, 1908, of the arrangements he had concluded in Leipzig for the publication of his work. In a card bearing the postal stamp June 16, 1911, he wrote indicating his acceptance of Davidson's invitation to visit him and asked his aid in checking two rabbinic references.

That Ehrlich could be abrasive in scholarly matters even towards a friend is seen from the difference of opinion he expressed concerning

the translation of a word in Davidson's edition of *Saadia's Polemic Against Hiwi Al-Balkhi* (New York, 1915). Davidson had sent a copy of his work to Ehrlich, who wrote on July 6, 1915, disagreeing with the rendering of a term. Maintaining that Saadia was influenced by the Arabic, he preferred to translate it otherwise. Davidson replied good-naturedly on July 22, explaining the reasons for his translation and rejecting Ehrlich's interpretation.

An especially close relationship was maintained over the years between Ehrlich and Louis Ginzberg. Eli Ginzberg has recalled that in his father's opinion, "Ehrlich was second to none in understanding the Bible and shedding light on its more obscure passages."[26] He quotes from a review by his father, who stated that "the nineteenth century produced three great Jewish exegetes: Luzzatto in Italy and Malbim and Ehrlich in Poland."[27] On various occasions Louis Ginzberg joined with others in efforts to raise funds in behalf of Ehrlich.

The Ginzberg files at the archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary shed additional light on the relations between the two scholars. When Ginzberg was appointed to the faculty of the Seminary, Ehrlich sent him a letter of congratulations in German, dated August 13, 1902. He also included a few exegetical comments. In 1917 Ginzberg endeavored to raise funds for the publication of a jubilee volume in honor of Ehrlich's seventieth birthday and enlisted the aid of Judah L. Magnes in the project. The Ginzberg files contain Magnes's correspondence with prospective contributors to the volume. In his form letter, Magnes presented Ehrlich as "the greatest of Biblical exegetes" and listed the names of various scholars who would participate in the jubilee volume.

On November 6, 1917, Magnes reported to Ginzberg that the sum of $385 had been raised from various subscribers, including Jacob H. Schiff, Louis Marshall, Mayer Sulzberger, and Adolph Lewisohn. Apparently, however, the plans for the jubilee volume did not materialize, and the following year it was decided instead to raise funds for the publication of supplementary volumes of Ehrlich's *Randglossen*. The *New York Times* of June 3, 1918, carried the following news item:

Ask Aid for Dr. Ehrlich's Book

A circular bearing the signatures of Professor Charles P. Fagnani of the Union Theological Seminary and L. W. Batten of the General Theological Seminary

> invites $2000 in subscriptions to publish supplementary volumes in his *Randglossen Zur Hebraischen Bibel*, a work dealing with comments on the Old Testament after the manner of Rashi and other ancient commentators. It is desired to help Mr. Ehrlich in his declining years to enjoy the culmination of the labors of a lifetime. Clinton B. Rice, Union Theological Seminary, Broadway and 120th Street, is Treasurer of the fund.

Louis Ginzberg's name is not mentioned in the above announcement, but he was among the signers of the circular letter.[28] Magnes wrote Ginzberg that he was happy with the new plans, and stated that while he had returned the money that had been previously received he was confident it could be reobtained. Ginzberg sent the circular letter to Samuel Schulman, who had studied with Ehrlich and now agreed to be of assistance. He also appealed for help to Stephen S. Wise, who had also been a student of Ehrlich. Wise responded enthusiastically and undertook to contact several people. On June 30, 1918, he informed Ginzberg that he had obtained a contribution of $100 from the Eastern Council Committee of the CCAR. A letter came from Louis Marshall containing a renewal of his previous pledge of $150. Despite these efforts, the plan to publish a supplementary volume fell through, and with the death of Ehrlich the following year it was abandoned.

Ginzberg's files also contain a copy of the notice of probate from the surrogate's court of the county of New York in which he was named among those who were invited to appraise Ehrlich's property. According to Eli Ginzberg, his father tried to salvage Ehrlich's literary remains, but his widow wished to be well paid before she released his papers.[29]

Ehrlich's Reputation and Accomplishments

In his sketch entitled "Arnold B. Ehrlich: A Personal Recollection,"[30] Richard M. Stern, who studied with Ehrlich for a number of years, reported that he had acquired from Ehrlich's daughter, Olga Auerbach, a few of Ehrlich's notebooks for the New York library of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. The library now has sixteen of these notebooks, which contain additional *Randglossen* on various biblical books.[31] Stern studied daily with Ehrlich during 1911–1919 and on the basis of his close observation of his teacher has

added to our knowledge of his life and character. Among the rabbis and personalities who studied under Ehrlich he mentions Samuel Schulman, Leon Harrison, Bernard Drachman, Stephen S. Wise, George A. Kohut, and Isaac S. Moses. Ehrlich's Christian students included Charles Fagnani and Julius Bewer, both of the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary. Stern indicates also that Jacob H. Schiff and Dr. Isaac Adler, son of Rabbi Samuel Adler of Temple Emanu-el, helped finance the publication of Ehrlich's *Randglossen.*

In his Prolegomenon to the reprinted edition of the *Mikra*, Orlinsky performed an important service by indicating the attention which Ehrlich's work has elicited and by culling references to various evaluations and reviews of his writings. In addition to the sources he cited and to those already mentioned above, note should be taken also of the following materials which add to our knowledge of Ehrlich's work and career.

Joshua Bloch, who is recalled as one of the early admirers of Ehrlich, was the author of a Hebrew article published in *Tarbut* [Culture] following Ehrlich's death.[32] Here he characterized Ehrlich as the "giant among the Hebrew Bible scholars in our generation" and reemphasized his highly developed linguistic sense. One of Ehrlich's students at the Hebrew Preparatory School of Temple Emanu-el, Bernard Drachman, in his memoirs, recalled Ehrlich's erudition and effective teaching.[33] Earlier, in his survey article "Neo-Hebraic Literature in America,"[34] he drew attention to the contribution which Ehrlich had made in the first two volumes of the *Mikra.*

Max Raisin published in *Ha-Shiloah* a survey article entitled "Sefat Ever ve-Sifrutah ba-Amerikah" [The Hebrew language and its literature in America] in which he listed the first two volumes of the *Mikra* among the most important books to have appeared during the 1890's.[35]

Among the memoirists who recorded their impressions of Ehrlich were also Rebekah Kohut and Philip Cowen. In her autobiography, the wife of Alexander Kohut recalled the visits of Ehrlich, "the great Hebrew linguist who taught George Kohut and Stephen S. Wise Hebrew."[36] She also mentioned that with Ehrlich's help Emma Lazarus became a "profound student of the Bible in the Hebrew language."[37] Philip Cowen, editor and publisher of the *American Hebrew*, commented on Ehrlich's feelings of superiority and mentioned his insis-

tence on sharing some exegetical point during his visits to his office.[38]

Mordecai M. Kaplan, in his autobiographical essay "The Way I Have Come,"[39] recalls that while pursuing studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary during his college years, he came under the influence of Ehrlich, "one of the greatest Jewish exegetes of modern times." He writes that Ehrlich taught him "to penetrate through the vast layers of traditional commentators to the rock-bottom original intent of the biblical authors. In doing so, he undermined my belief in the Mosaic authorship of the Torah and in the historicity of the miracles."

Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden), who translated the Bible into Yiddish, made many references to Ehrlich's commentaries which were incorporated into his *Heoros Tsum Tanakh* (New York, 1949). Dr. Mordecai Kosover prepared a "Lexicon of Commentators and Commentaries" as an appendix to the volume and included a biographical entry on Ehrlich. Extensive use of Ehrlich's works was made also in the preparation of the new Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible. This is readily seen from the many references in *Notes on the Translation of the Torah* (Philadelphia, 1969), edited by Harry M. Orlinsky.

In a special issue of *Gilyonot* devoted to Hebrew writing in America, Joseph Reider contributed an article entitled "Biblical Criticism Among Jews in the United States,"[40] in which he discussed the contributions of Ehrlich alongside those of Max Margolis and Israel Eitan. He discussed both his unique approach and his offensive treatment of both medieval and contemporary exegetes.

A comprehensive evaluation of Ehrlich's role was that of Menahem Haran in his extensive survey, "Hebrew Biblical Research from the Beginning of the Nationalist Period to Our Days."[41] Ranking Ehrlich among such original scholars of the end of the last century as Meir Ish-Shalom (Meir Friedmann) and Benjamin Szold, Haran characterized his approach as a quasi-secular one. Ehrlich did not accept the historicity of the biblical account and was given to linguistic innovation. Despite his shortcomings, he is to be reckoned among our finest exegetes, who in his work presaged many of the new directions of modern biblical research.

Ehrlich's accomplishments were noted also by Isaiah Berger in his survey "Jewish Wissenschaft in America,"[42] and by Ismar Elbogen in his "American Jewish Scholarship: A Survey."[43] The Hebrew version

of Raphael Weiss's *Encyclopaedia Judaica* entry on Ehrlich was reprinted in his *Studies in the Text and Language of the Bible.* In an added footnote, he presented a Hebrew translation of Ehrlich's confession concerning his baptism. The editors of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* published an addendum to the Ehrlich entry,[44] in which they pointed out that according to Richard Gottheil, Ehrlich had been converted at the age of twenty-three. A brief listing on Ehrlich was also included by Moshe Z. Sole in his Hebrew *Lexicon of Bible Commentators and Researchers.*[45]

In his Hebrew article entitled "Renaissance of A. B. Ehrlich,"[46] Getzel Kressel commented on the renewed interest in Ehrlich, as evidenced by the appearance of the two reprint editions of the *Mikra.* He indicated that in the light of new information some corrections were required in the entry on Ehrlich that he had published in his *Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature.* A review essay by Paltiel Birnbaum on the Ktav Publishing House reprint of the *Mikra* gave extensive examples of Ehrlich's methodology.[47]

Ehrlich's View of Himself

We conclude our study with the self-evaluation which Ehrlich offered of his work in an article entitled "Arnold B. Ehrlich and His Biblical Exegesis," which appeared in the *American Hebrew* of May 9, 1902. Occasioned by the completion of the *Mikra*, it consists of a statement by Ehrlich on the scope and aims of his work, as dictated to a reporter for the weekly magazine.

Ehrlich confessed that his work was a financial failure, but took pride in the praise of competent critics. He explained how his method differed from that of other Jewish commentators, such as Saadia and Luzzatto, and criticized Graetz for his excessive emendations. He then went on to analyze the shortcomings of Christian biblical scholarship, which was rooted in theological bias and exhibited a lack of at-homeness in the Hebrew language. In his concluding paragraphs he expressed his credo regarding his own biblical research as follows:

> To me the Bible is the sum and substance of all that constituted the national life of my ancestors, the life intellectual and spiritual, the life interior and exterior. The Hebrew text has thus for me a much higher worth. The words are for me not dead letters but the signs of life of the mighty national spirit which once

spoke to my fathers and, in a certain sense, still speaks to me. . . .

The Prophets and Bards of Israel are to me not only the Men of God, but they are also classics of a people; classics which with all their religious fervor, never ranted the nonsense of the street revivalist of today. They always uttered clear good sense and endeavored to express their thought clearly and well. . . .

As to the language of the Bible it must be borne in mind that Hebrew was not merely the language of prophecy, and merely the language of religious discourse and religious hymn—it was also the language of everyday existence, the language wherein the Hebrews gave expression to all their thoughts and desires even when they merely sought relaxation; the language which they used when they sported and joked, when they wrangled and abused. And that language being subject to the general laws which govern all other languages, has its peculiarities, its idioms, the sense of which will not be elicited by a study of the roots of the words but might be sought in their *usage*. That is what I strive to do.

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Notes

1. New York: Ktav, 1969, and Israel, 1969 (no publisher indicated).
2. See Richard Gottheil, *The Life of Gustav Gottheil: Memoir of a Priest in Israel* (Williamsport, Pa., 1936), p. 76.
3. See "Biographical Sketches of Jews," *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 5 (1904–05), pp. 83–84; David de Sola Pool, *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 6 (1931), p. 57.
4. *Saat auf Hoffnung* 25 (1888): 15–20.
5. Ibid. 26 (1889): 18–34, 42–86.
6. *Mikra Ki-Feshuto*, vol. 2, pp. 257–258.
7. Reprinted in Gottheil, *Life of Gustav Gottheil*, pp. 79–81.
8. *Kadimah* 1, no. 4, (April 1899): 154–156.
9. Samuel Niger, *Dertsaylers un Romanisten* (New York, 1946), p. 93.
10. Chone Shmeruk, "On the History of *Shund* Literature in Yiddish" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 52, no. 2 (1983).
11. Gottheil, *Life of Gustav Gottheil*, p. 207.
12. *Der Zeitgeist*, vol. 2, pp. 227, 243, 258–259, 271.
13. Temple Emanu-el contributed its library to Columbia University in 1892. See Bernard R. Crystal and Rudolph Ellenbogen, "Hebraica and Judaica Collections at Columbia University," *Jewish Book Annual* 37 (1979–80): 102–103.
14. *Kadimah* 1, no. 2 (February 1899): 95–96; ibid., 1, no. 3 (March 1899): 138–139; ibid., 1, no. 4 (April 1899): 192; ibid., 1, no. 6 (January 1899): 256.
15. *Hebraica* 6 (July 1890): 309–311.
16. *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 13 (1903), pp. 39, 45, 88.

17. Ibid., vol. 15 (1905), p. 44.

18. Ibid., vol. 17 (1907), p. 30.

19. Ibid., vol. 30 (1930), p. 73.

20. Ehrlich's letters to Felsenthal are located at the American Jewish Historical Society.

21. Ehrlich's letter to Gottheil is located in the Richard Gottheil files at the Zionist Archives and Library. A copy is also available at the American Jewish Archives.

22. Ehrlich's letters to Heller are located at the American Jewish Archives.

23. Rabbi Willner is listed in the *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 5 (1904–05), p. 105, as the rabbi in Meridian, Miss.

24. See her *Out of Endless Yearnings* (New York, 1946), pp. 69–70.

25. Davidson's review was followed by a pen portrait of Ehrlich by Jacob Goldstein, entitled "A New Rashi." Goldstein offered his impressions of Ehrlich and his work on the basis of a conversation with him. He indicated that Ehrlich was seeking someone who could translate his work into English. The quotation is from Ehrlich to Davidson, August 4, 1899, Jewish Theological Seminary Archives, New York.

26. Eli Ginzberg, *Keeper of the Law: Louis Ginzberg* (Philadelphia, 1956), p. 65.

27. Ibid., p. 97.

28. For the text of the letter, see ibid., pp. 176–177.

29. Ibid., p. 65.

30. *American Jewish Archives* 23, no. 1 (April 1971): 73–85.

31. They comprise two sets of booklets, numbered III–X and IV–X, plus a booklet containing penciled notes.

32. *Tarbut* 1, no. 2 (December 1919), 80–82.

33. Bernard Drachman, *Unfailing Light* (New York, 1948), pp. 41–42.

34. *Appendix to Proceedings of the Seventh Biennial Convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association* (1900), p. 76.

35. *Ha-Shiloah* 8, no. 6, pp. 548–549. The article was reprinted with deletions in Raisin's *Dappim mi-Pinkaso Shel Rabbi* (Brooklyn, 1941).

36. Rebekah Kohut, *My Portion* (New York, 1925), p. 125.

37. Ibid., p. 177. Other sources, however, indicate that it was Louis Schnabel who tutored Emma Lazarus in Hebrew.

38. Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York, 1932), p. 139.

39. See Ira Eisenstein and Eugene Kohn, eds., *Mordecai M. Kaplan: An Evaluation* (New York, 1952), p. 289.

40. *Gilyonot* 31, nos. 8–10 (Ab–Elul 1954): 131–133.

41. *Bitzaron* 11, no. 7 (June–July 1950): 190, 193–196.

42. *Sefer ha-Shanah li-Yehude Amerikah*, 1939, pp. 348–349.

43. *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 45 (1943), p. 60.

44. *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book, 1973*, p. 196.

45. *Lexicon Meforshe ha-Mikra ve-Hokrav* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 16–17.

46. *Hadoar* 50, no. 38 (September 17, 1971).

47. *Hadoar* 49, no. 22 (March 28, 1969).